

==== *Classics of the 20th Century* ====

Original article

UDC 784

<https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2026-1-106-130>

EDN [OZRLVK](#)



Dutch choral music of the twentieth century: A dialogue between experiment and tradition

Alexander S. Ryzhinsky

Gnesin Russian Academy of Music,
Moscow, Russian Federation,

✉ ryzhinskii@gnesin-academy.ru,

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9558-0252>



Abstract. This article examines the main trends of Dutch choral music in the 20th century. The Renaissance of Dutch Music (a term used by Herbert Antcliffe) at the end of the 19th century, associated with the active concert life of the country and the development of musical education, led to the emergence of original compositions, in which choral works play a significant role. Composers such as Bernard Zweers, Julius Röntgen, Johan Wagenaar, Alphons Diepenbrock laid the foundations for a distinctive identity of modern choral music in the Netherlands.

The influence of the general trends in European music resulted in the emergence of two contrasting tendencies in the evolution of Dutch music. The first, focused on preserving national traditions, is represented by the work of Hendrik Andriessen and his followers – Herman Strategier and Albert de Klerk. The second, aimed at incorporating avant-garde trends, is associated with Willem Pijper and his students, including Guillaume Louis Frédéric Landré, Henk Badings and Rudolf Escher. The works by Ton de Leeuw, Hans Kox and Louis Andriessen represent a culmination in the development of Dutch choral music in the twentieth century. Kox is known for creating large-scale vocal-symphonic compositions, closely related to existential themes. De Leeuw’s works illustrate stylistic pluralism: the composer was influenced by both innovations in modern Western composition and traditional Eastern musical genres (Indian raga, Iranian maqam, etc.). Andriessen, known for his experiments in bridging elite and popular musical art, also combined modern compositional techniques with elements of early music – from *Ars antiqua* to early Baroque – in his works. Thus, despite the “late start” in the development of choral composition, Dutch choral music – in comparison with Italy, France and Germany – acquired a distinctive character during the 20th century, marked by a continuing connection between bold contemporary experimentation and the centuries-old traditions of Dutch music.

Keywords: choral music, Netherlands, Pijper, Andriessen, de Leeuw, choral texture, vocal timbres

For citation: Ryzhinsky, A. S. (2026). Dutch choral music of the twentieth century: A dialogue between experiment and tradition. *Contemporary Musicology*, 10(1), 106–130. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2026-1-106-130>

Класси́ки XX века

Научная статья

**Нидерландская хоровая музыка XX века:
диалог эксперимента и традиции**

Александр Сергеевич Рыжинский

Российская академия музыки имени Гнесиных,

г. Москва, Российская Федерация,

✉ ryzhinskii@gnesin-academy.ru,

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9558-0252>

Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу основных путей развития хоровой музыки Нидерландов в XX веке. «Ренессанс голландской музыки» (выражение Герберта Энтклиффа), обусловленный резко активизировавшейся в конце XIX века концертной жизнью страны и развитием музыкального образования, привел к появлению целого ряда оригинальных сочинений, среди которых важное место занимают хоровые опусы. Такие мастера, как Бернард Зверс, Юлиус Рёнтген, Йохан Вагенар, Альфонс Дипенброк заложили крепкую основу для формирования самобытного, узнаваемого лица современной хоровой музыки Нидерландов. Влияние общих процессов европейского музыкального искусства проявило себя в возникновении двух оппозиционных линий в эволюции нидерландской музыки. Первая из них, ориентированная на сохранение национальных традиций, представлена творчеством Хендрика

Андриссена и его последователями — Германом Штрагегиром, Альбертом де Клерком. Вторая, направленная на внедрение авангардных веяний, связана с деятельностью Виллема Пейпера и его учеников Гийома Луи Фредерика Ландре, Хенка Бадингса, Рудольфа Эшера. Кульминацией в развитии нидерландской хоровой музыки прошлого столетия можно признать творчество Тона де Лейфа, Ханса Кокса и Луи Андриссена. С именем Кокса связано создание наиболее масштабных вокально-симфонических композиций, тесно связанных с экзистенциальной тематикой. Творчество де Лейфа — образец стилового плюрализма: на композитора оказали влияние как новации в развитии современной западной композиции, так и традиционные жанры восточной музыки (индийская рага, иранский макам и др.). Луи Андриссен, известный своими экспериментами по сближению элитарного и массового музыкального искусства, кроме того, объединял в своих сочинениях элементы современных техник композиции с техническими элементами старинной музыки — от *Ars antiqua* до раннего барокко. Таким образом, несмотря на «позднее включение» в процесс развития хоровой композиции, в сравнении с Италией, Францией и Германией, нидерландская хоровая музыка приобрела в течение XX века свой оригинальный облик, отличительными особенностями которого явилась постоянно сохраняемая связь между смелыми экспериментами сегодняшнего дня и многовековыми традициями нидерландской композиции.

Ключевые слова: хоровая музыка, Нидерланды, Виллем Пейпер, Луи Андриссен, Тон де Лейф, хоровая фактура, вокальная тембрика

Для цитирования: Рыжинский А. С. Нидерландская хоровая музыка XX века: диалог эксперимента и традиции // Современные проблемы музыкознания. 2026. Т. 10, № 1. С. 106–130.

<https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2026-1-106-130>

Introduction

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, composers from countries that had for several preceding centuries been virtually “invisible” on the musical map of the world began to play a noticeable role in the development of European choral music. In this context, the history of Dutch choral composition appears particularly intriguing, given the foundational significance of the Franco-Flemish masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for the development of European music as a whole. Although even the most substantial choral works created in the Netherlands in the twentieth century can scarcely be regarded as defining the collective profile of European choral music of that period, their study nevertheless clearly testifies to the revival of an autonomous compositional school.

It cannot be said that Dutch choral music of the last hundred years has been thoroughly studied. Musicologists have focused on the work of individual composers, without emphasizing their choral works [1; 2; 3; 4], or else the Dutch tradition has been integrated into pan-European processes of compositional technique development [5]. The purpose of this article is to summarize the available information on the development of Dutch choral art, as well as to formulate conclusions about the main features of choral composition in the last century.

“The Renaissance of Dutch Music”¹

A harbinger of the revival of the Dutch compositional school was the construction of the Concertgebouw and the founding of the orchestra of the same name in 1888.² Five years earlier, the Amsterdam Conservatory had been established as a result of the dedicated efforts of Julius Röntgen, Frans Coenen, Daniël de Lange,

¹ The phrase “Renaissance of Dutch music” was first used in 1924 by the British musicologist Herbert Antcliffe in reference to the work of Dutch composers of the first quarter of the twentieth century—Julius Röntgen, Johan Wagenaar, Bernard Zweers, and Alphons Diepenbrock [1].

² The importance of this event can hardly be overstated. In his article devoted to the reception of the oratorio works of Johann Sebastian Bach in the Netherlands, I. van Gessel, pointing to the crucial educational mission of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, writes: “...as late as 1874 the incomprehension of Dutch audiences for Bach’s masterpiece [i.e., the St. Matthew Passion.—A.R.] would cause an idealist conductor to break down in tears, but that twenty-five years later Dutch musical life had managed to get its act together and was finally ready to embark on a performance tradition of international standing” [7, p. 164–165].

and Bernard Zweers. Of these figures, the latter deserves particular attention. Bernard Zweers (1854–1924)—composer, choirmaster, and pedagogue—consistently emphasized throughout his career the primacy of his native country’s artistic heritage. This was reflected not only in the predominance of national imagery in his works (ranging from depictions of the Dutch landscape to evocations of Vermeer and Rembrandt) and in the use of folkloric motifs, but also in his principled restriction of vocal compositions to Dutch-language texts—a choice that naturally limited their dissemination beyond the country’s borders.

Zweers’s authority in the Netherlands was so great that he was entrusted with composing the *Coronation Cantata* for the accession of Queen Wilhelmina in 1890, as well as the Preludes and Choruses for Joost van den Vondel’s play *Gijsbrecht van Aemstel* for the opening of the Amsterdam Municipal Theatre in 1894. On the whole, Zweers’s choral works can scarcely be described as original: they are characterized by predominantly chordal writing, a clear tonal foundation, and harmonic language oriented toward the German *Liedertafel* tradition. At the same time, one should note the vocal comfort of Zweers’s music, undoubtedly connected with his activity as a choral conductor.³

The formation of the cantata-oratorio genre in Dutch music is closely associated with the name of Johan Wagenaar (1862–1941)—composer, conductor, organist, the first director of the Utrecht Conservatory (1904–1919), and subsequently one of the directors of the Royal Conservatory in The Hague (1919–1937), the oldest conservatory in the Netherlands. Wagenaar’s first cantata, *De Schipbreuk* (*The Shipwreck*, 1889), already reveals his distinctive satirical gift and his ability to create vivid parodies. Among the principal targets of his criticism were operatic and concert performances devoid of substantive depth and designed merely to entertain audiences with clichéd and often nonsensical plots. This satirical line would later be continued in the cantatas *De fortuinlijke kist* (*The Lucky Chest*, 1916) and *Jupiter Amans* (1925).

³ Amateur choral music-making has remained highly popular in the Netherlands for centuries. This is due not only to the active participation of much of the population in Catholic and Protestant worship services, but also to the distinctive unifying role of choral performance, which corresponds to what is described in Dutch scholarly and journalistic literature as “the national sense of solidarity” [8, p. 14].

Alongside its topical content, the music itself undoubtedly held considerable interest for audiences. An analysis of the cantata *De Schipbreuk* reveals a wide variety of textural solutions—from the chordal writing characteristic also of Zweers's scores to complex polyphonic episodes. Particularly noteworthy is the inclusion of choral monophony, antiphonal exchanges between male and female choirs, and passages of homophonic-harmonic texture, within which the relatively new technique—entering common practice only in the final quarter of the nineteenth century—of singing with closed mouth is employed.

A special place among the composers of the first generation of the revived Dutch compositional school belongs to Alphons Diepenbrock (1862–1921). Despite lacking formal conservatory training,⁴ this outstanding musician, through his study of the legacy of early Netherlandish masters and the works of nineteenth-century European Romantic composers, developed a distinctive musical voice of his own. Deeply interested in choral music, he composed dozens of works for various vocal forces—female, male, and mixed ensembles, both a cappella and with instrumental accompaniment. Unlike Zweers and Wagenaar, Diepenbrock did not confine himself primarily to texts by Dutch poets. His choral works are distinguished by the high literary quality of the texts he selected—an attribute reflecting not only his philological education but also his own literary talent. Alphons Diepenbrock was known as an essayist and contributed extensively to the journals *De Amsterdammer*, *De Nieuwe Gids*, and *De Kroniek*. Among his favored authors were Goethe, Hölderlin, Novalis, Brentano, Heine, Baudelaire, Verlaine, and other prominent European poets.

Combining a late-Romantic harmonic language, akin to that of Mahler and Richard Strauss, with a polyphonic organization oriented toward the traditions of the early Franco-Flemish composers, Diepenbrock created large-scale choral works characterized by flexible interaction among diverse textural types. In many compositions one encounters the use of canonic writing, typically associated with the introduction of text of particular semantic importance. Such examples may be found in the male chorus *Tibur* (1884) and the mixed chorus *Dämmerung* (1884).

⁴ The composer graduated from the University of Amsterdam with a degree in philology and defended a doctoral dissertation devoted to the life and thought of the Roman philosopher Seneca the Younger.

The majority of the composer's works reveal an orientation toward the principles of motet-like strophic design: Diepenbrock strives for detailed reflection of the nuances of the literary text, employing tonal, tempo-related, and textural contrasts. Among the latter are frequent juxtapositions of chordal and antiphonal writing, as well as chordal and imitative-polyphonic textures. Homophonic-harmonic texture is used more rarely; in such cases, clear differentiation of foreground and background may be achieved not only through dynamics but also through articulation. Thus, for example, in the second strophe of the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* for male choir and organ (1906), the bass melody marked *legato* unfolds against the detached articulation of the tenor parts (*Example 1*).

Active use of antiphony is likewise characteristic of Diepenbrock's works. Most often, the composer juxtaposes male and female voices—in scores written for mixed choir—or contrasts high and low voices in compositions for homogeneous ensembles. In the vocal quartet *De groote hon en de kleine kat* (*The Big Dog and the Little Cat*, 1903), the antiphonal exchanges between female and male voices, combined with onomatopoeic effects, become an important means of musical characterization (*Example 2*). The creation of such a humorous musical piece may also be viewed as a continuation of the Netherlandish tradition of rendering comic scenes from everyday life in music—one recalls *El grillo* by Josquin des Prez or *Ad altre le voi dare* by Orlando di Lasso.

Tempo I

The musical score for Example 1 consists of four staves: Tenor I, Tenor II, Basso I, and Basso II. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Tempo I'. The lyrics are: 'cha - ri - tas, et spi - ri - ta - lis un - cti - o. Tu sep - ti - for - mis mu - ne - rit. poco f Tu sep - ti - for - mis mu - ne -'. The Basso I part has a long melisma over the first two measures. The Tenor parts enter in the third measure with a detached articulation, while the Bassos have a more legato line.

Example 1. Alphons Diepenbrock. *Veni Creator Spiritus*, bars 25–30

Sis, Sis! Mauw, mauw! En een houw en een beet en een blaf en een grauw En een grauw

Waf! Waf, Waf! En een houw En een blaf En een grauw En de

Example 2. Alphons Diepenbrock. *De groote hon en de kleine kat*, bars 21–25

Diepenbrock's equal attention to sacred and secular music, to philosophical lyricism and to humorous miniatures, reveals him as a worthy successor to the traditions of early Netherlandish music, whose development had been interrupted in the seventeenth century. In the apt formulation of Ekaterina D. Devyatko, "Diepenbrock's multifaceted activity played a key role in the emergence of a new stage in the development of Dutch musical art—the beginnings of compositional individualism characteristic of the practice of his successors, the Dutch composers of the twentieth century" [2, c. 203]. As the most significant musical figure of his generation, Diepenbrock, in his conscious aspiration to restore the Netherlands' standing in European musical culture, largely determined the directions of creative inquiry pursued by the composers of the second generation of the "Dutch musical renaissance": Hendrik Andriessen (1892–1981) and Willem Pijper (1894–1947)—the first Dutch composers to receive their professional training in their homeland (Andriessen as a student of Zweers, Pijper as a student of Wagenaar).

*Hendrik Andriessen—Willem Pijper:
Two Principal Branches in the Evolution of Dutch Music
in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*

A comparison of Andriessen and Pijper reveals significant differences in their views on the paths of modern music's development. Pijper was to a considerable extent receptive to avant-garde tendencies in the arts, whereas Andriessen oriented himself primarily toward the established canons found in the works of his older contemporaries. At the same time, the choral output of both composers is united by an evident connection with the traditions of early Netherlandish music.

This connection manifests itself in the modal foundation of their harmonic language and in the melodic shaping of the individual voices that form the choral vertical. Although Pijper composed exclusively secular choral works, while Andriessen—himself the son of a church organist⁵—was predominantly drawn to sacred composition, their works are united by a preference for traditional textural types and a classical approach to the treatment of choral timbre.

Nevertheless, a study of Andriessen's works in comparison with those of his predecessors and even certain contemporaries—for example, another student of Zweers, Ernest Willem Mulder⁶ (1898–1959)—leads to the conclusion that the sonority of sacred music underwent a substantial transformation. Rejecting the Romantic hyperbolization of textural and harmonic means characteristic of the second half of the nineteenth century, Andriessen restored to church compositions a meditative concentration and mystical simplicity grounded in clear harmonic structures. One also notes his frequent use of unison or octave doubling across all vocal parts, as well as his sensitivity to the harmonic color of pure intervals (*Example 3*)—distinctive musical “archaisms” in Andriessen's scores that are clearly oriented toward recreating the sonority of pre-tonal music.

In contrast to the relative uniformity of Hendrik Andriessen's works in their harmonic and textural design, Pijper's compositions written before and after 1920 differ markedly. In the works of his first creative decade, one encounters the same intonational and textural points of reference as in the music of his teacher Johan Wagenaar: three- and four-part harmonic writing with a clearly recognizable tonal foundation, cast in simple strophic forms. With the double-choir a cappella work *Heer Halewijn* (*Lord Halewijn*, 1920), set to the text of an ancient Dutch ballad, Pijper decisively abandoned classical-Romantic tonality in favor of freely treated dissonance freed from obligatory resolution—an approach clearly reflecting the influence of the Second Viennese School, particularly Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern.⁷

⁵ Hendrik Andriessen was born into the family of Nicolaas Andriessen, organist of the Church of St. Joseph in Haarlem.

⁶ The Dutch composer Ernest Willem Mulder, like Hendrik Andriessen, was primarily known for his church music. Among his works, a special place was occupied by vocal-symphonic compositions closely resembling the sound world of French composers, especially the music of César Franck—the *Requiem* (1927–1932), *Stabat Mater* (1948), and *Te Deum* (1951).

⁷ On Pijper's attitude to the music of the Second Viennese School see [5, p. 143–145].

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of 'Laudate Dominum' by Hendrik Andriessen. It is a four-part vocal setting for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.), with piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Andante maestoso' and the dynamics are 'f' (forte). The lyrics are 'Lau - da - - - te Do - mi - num'. The piano part features a complex, chromatic harmonic structure with overlapping lines and sustained notes.

Example 3. Hendrik Andriessen. *Laudate Dominum*, bars 1–3

Similar solutions characterize his subsequent choral works based on Dutch folk sources: *Heer Daniëlken* (*Lord Daniëlken*) for double choir a cappella (1925) and *Van den Coninc van Castilien* (*Van den Coninc of Castile*) for four-part male choir (1936). Through these compositions Pijper gained recognition abroad as the leading representative of the Dutch musical avant-garde. It was he who represented the Netherlands at the founding meeting of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in Salzburg in 1922 and who subsequently headed its Dutch section.

It is striking that in Pijper's works written from 1920 onward, resources of chromatic tonality, polytonality, and even atonality are combined with texts of traditional Dutch ballads. Although Pijper collected examples of Dutch folklore throughout his life, in his choral works he made use exclusively of their textual

component. This choice may reflect, as in the case of his teacher Zweers, a conscious orientation toward the creation of a distinctly national Dutch musical art.

Among those who made a significant contribution to the subsequent development of Dutch choral music were the students of Willem Pijper (Guillaume Landré and Henk Badings) and those of Hendrik Andriessen (Herman Strategier and Albert de Klerk). Each of these “evolutionary branches” of Dutch music preserved the defining traits of its founder. Strategier and de Klerk became the authors of numerous sacred works oriented toward the traditions of their teacher Andriessen. Landré and Badings, by contrast, demonstrated an orientation toward the key achievements of contemporary music. These differences were also conditioned by the specific professional contexts in which the composers worked.

Herman Strategier (1912–1988), a graduate of the Roman Catholic School of Church Music in Utrecht who subsequently combined the roles of church organist and composer, devoted himself primarily to liturgical composition: three Masses for choir a cappella, 21 Masses for choir with organ, and dozens of antiphons, psalms, and motets. Even in his secular works he often turned to sacred themes, as in the vocal-symphonic compositions *Cantica pro tempore natali* (*Songs for Christmastide*, 1953), *Arnhemsche psalm* (*Arnhem Psalm*, 1955), and *Rembrandtcantate* (1956). Like Andriessen, Strategier paid particular attention to unaccompanied choral writing, incorporating a cappella passages not only in works with organ but also in vocal-symphonic compositions. One example is found in the opening measures of *Arnhemsche psalm*, where the octave doubling of the unaccompanied choir evokes associations with the Gregorian chant that traditionally precedes movements of the early Mass. It should also be noted that Strategier was an active choral conductor; his ensemble, the Madrigal Choir of Leiden, was known for its performances of Franco-Flemish repertoire of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Another student of Andriessen, Albert de Klerk (1912–1998), likewise combined the activities of composer and church organist throughout his life. Even before graduating from the Amsterdam Conservatory, he succeeded his teacher in 1934 as organist of St. Joseph’s Church in Haarlem, a position he held until his death. Though not as prolific as Strategier, he nonetheless left a mark on the sacred music of the second

half of the twentieth century with such works as the Mass *Mater Sanctaelaetitiae* for women's choir and organ (1948), the Mass *Sancti Pape Pii Decimi* for mixed choir and organ (1956), and *Te Deum* for mezzo-soprano, choir, and orchestra (1979). The diatonic foundation of his works—based largely on the use of church modes—is combined with vivid major-minor harmonies, evoking associations not only with Andriessen but also with the music of Francis Poulenc and Darius Milhaud.

An alternative line to the fundamentally traditional choral idiom of Strategier and de Klerk was represented by the students of Willem Pijper. Although they concentrated primarily on symphonic and chamber-instrumental music, they also contributed to choral composition with works marked by experimentation with new compositional techniques and even novel timbral effects. One of Pijper's earliest students, Guillaume Landré (1905–1968), under his teacher's influence began to explore not only the expressive properties of dissonance but also numerical combinations shaping the intonational and rhythmic organization of music.⁸ This interest largely explains Landré's engagement with serial dodecaphony, particularly with such derivative procedures as rotation and permutation. Even in his vocal works he employed pitch series based on diatonic successions of six to eight tones. Like Pijper, Landré worked with Dutch-language texts, though he preferred original poetry to folklore. Among his favored poets were Leo Braat⁹ (*Groet der martelaren—Greeting of the Martyrs* 1944) and Anna de Vries¹⁰ (*Berceuse voor moede mensen—Berceuse for Weary People*, 1952).

⁸ Willem Pijper's initiation into a Masonic lodge in 1938 shaped the composer's interest in one of the most important Kabbalistic methods of interpretation—gematria, based on uncovering the hidden meaning of a verbal text through the numerical values of its constituent letters. A number of works from his final decade were preceded by numerical calculations relating to intonational formulas and formal proportions. Landré also employed technical devices grounded in numerical manipulation. Their presence is reflected even in the titles of certain orchestral compositions: *Permutazioni sinfoniche* (*Symphonic Permutations*, 1957) and *Anagrammen* (*Anagrams*, 1960).

⁹ Leo Braat (1908–1982) was a Dutch poet, sculptor, art historian, and editor of the journal *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur* (*Chronicle of Art and Culture*).

¹⁰ Anne de Vries (1904–1964) was a Dutch writer and poet, known for his series of books about Bartje Bartels, which enjoyed great popularity in the Netherlands.

A special place in mid-twentieth-century Dutch choral music is occupied by the work of Henk Badings (1907–1987), one of the most prolific composers of his time and the author of more than one thousand compositions, around eighty of which are choral works. Although he discontinued his studies with Willem Pijper due to creative disagreements, Badings owed his early experiments in symphonic music to Pijper, experiments that brought him his first success and attracted the attention of the distinguished Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg. Until the early 1950s, Badings's works demonstrated an orientation toward Romantic models, evident in their traditional tonal-harmonic language and adherence to strophic form. One of the most notable compositions of this period is the cycle *Vier geestelijke liederen* (*Four Sacred Songs*) for a cappella choir (1941), which, somewhat unexpectedly, recalls not so much the works of Pijper's school as the compositions of Hendrik Andriessen and his students, with their clear tonal foundation and predominance of chordal and homophonic-harmonic textures.

In the 1950s, Badings became one of the first composers in the Netherlands to experiment with electronic sound. During these years, he worked at the studio of the Delft University of Technology. Following Italian (Gian Carlo Menotti) and German (Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Hans Werner Henze) composers, Badings turned to the genre of radio opera. His first work in this genre, the radio opera *Orestes* (1954), already revealed remarkable acoustic innovations. In particular, to create fantastic sound effects, the composer employed the acceleration and deceleration of a pre-recorded male choir.

These experiments anticipated by nearly two decades the manipulation of previously recorded choral sound in Karlheinz Stockhausen's heptalogy *Licht* (specifically, "Unsichtbare Chöre" from the opera *Donnerstag*). The experience gained in composing radio operas¹¹ later proved valuable in Badings's exploration of the spatial separation of live and pre-recorded sound within a single composition. Such innovations appear in *Genesis* (1967) for male choir, percussion, and tape, as well as in *Cantata No. 7 Ballade van die bloeddorstige Jagter* (1970) for soloists, choir, orchestra, and tape.

¹¹ Henk Badings composed two radio operas—*Orestes* (1954) and *Asterion* (1957)—as well as one television opera *Salto mortale* (1959).

Drawing not only on the legacy of his Dutch predecessors but also actively incorporating the innovations of post-war avant-garde compositional techniques, Henk Badings created works that achieved broad recognition both in the Netherlands and abroad. It was therefore Badings who laid the foundation for the international reputation of Dutch academic music (including choral music), a reputation further strengthened by the activities of the next generation of composers, most notably Ton de Leeuw and Louis Andriessen.

*Dutch Choral Composition in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century:
from the Students of Henk Badings to Louis Andriessen*

Successfully combining traditional and the most advanced compositional techniques, Badings achieved considerable recognition not only in his own country but also abroad—in Germany, France, the United States, and even Australia. In the Netherlands, he maintained an extensive pedagogical practice. Among his students were Ton de Leeuw and Hans Kox—composers whose names are largely associated with the development of Dutch choral music from the 1960s to the 1990s. The former, Ton de Leeuw (1926–1996), was one of the most significant figures in Dutch cultural life: a composer, music producer at the country’s principal broadcasting organization, the Nederlandse Radio Unie, director and artistic director of the Amsterdam Conservatory, and visiting lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley.

De Leeuw’s oeuvre provides a compelling illustration of the well-known thesis of cultural pluralism as one of the defining characteristics of contemporary music.¹² From his youth, he was interested in various religious concepts related not only to Christianity but also to Eastern cosmological doctrines. Beginning as a composer oriented toward the music of Bartók, Pijper, and Badings (with whom he studied from 1947 to 1949), de Leeuw subsequently became fascinated with neo-modal technique in the spirit of Messiaen, in whose class he studied for several months in 1949–1950. A formative event for the young composer was his attendance at the Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music in 1953, where he encountered the works of Anton Webern. Thereafter,

¹² Let us cite a passage from an article by Hicran Alieva: “Composers now draw inspiration from a wide array of cultural traditions, resulting in eclectic and dynamic choral works” [9, p. 6].

he became the creator of the first examples of Dutch serialism. This compositional method primarily affected his instrumental music. By contrast, in his choral works of the same period (*Missa brevis* for mixed choir, 1952; *Vier koorliederen* [*Four Choral Songs*] for mixed choir a cappella on texts by anonymous medieval Dutch poets, 1953), de Leeuw adhered to relatively traditional means, composing music based on medieval modes, emphasizing pure intervals, and actively employing monophony and chordal textures.

His meeting with John Cage in 1958, as well as travels to Iran and India, led to a radical shift in the direction of his artistic development. The composer became deeply engaged in the study of Indian rāgas, the Iranian maqām, and the traditions of Japanese Noh theatre, acquainting himself with theoretical writings devoted to these Eastern traditions. At the same time, he studied scores by early masters—from *Ars antiqua* to the Renaissance—discovering significant parallels in the very perception of musical time between pre-classical European compositions and traditional Eastern music. According to de Leeuw, what unites these seemingly polar traditions is modality in a broad sense of the term (which he referred to as “extended modality”), positioned in opposition not only to serialism but also to chromatic tonality and atonality:

“Extended modality” is in a certain sense a reappreciation, a generalization and an extension of earlier modal principles, put into twentieth-century perspective. It is also a reaction to the impasse reached in our music, and is foreign to the background that bred both late western tonality and atonality [10, p. 83].

The composer frequently bases a work on the combination of various melodic formulas, both within a single horizontal line and in the superimposition of several voices, which accounts for the consistent use of monophony and heterophony in his music. A notable example of this approach is the choral score *Car nos vignes sont en fleur* (*Our Vineyards Are in Blossom*, 1983). The opening of the composition is constructed through the gradual expansion of the number of choral parts performing sustained tones or short melodic formulas—outside a fixed rhythm or only partially rhythmized. The principle of adding choral voices strongly recalls techniques previously encountered in post-war avant-garde scores by Luigi Nono (*Cori di Didone*, 1958) and György Ligeti (*Lux aeterna*, 1966): from the initial introduction of the central alto and tenor parts to the symmetrical expansion of the texture

through the addition of upper and lower voices (*Example 4*). This textural solution also corresponds to the prescribed spatial arrangement of the singers on stage¹³ (*Example 5*): in the first section, the formulas are introduced in a “centrifugal” manner, while in the third section they enter successively from left (soprano parts) to right (bass parts).

The image displays a musical score for Example 4, titled "Très lent". The score is divided into three sections by vertical dashed lines. The first section on the left features two vocal parts, T2 and A2, both marked "pp". The middle section contains four vocal parts: T3, A1, T1, and A3. The final section on the right features five vocal parts: S3, S2, S1, B1, and B2, all marked "pp sempre". Each part is represented by a musical staff with a treble or bass clef and a melodic line. The parts are arranged in a spatial layout that suggests a centrifugal or sequential entry from left to right.

Example 4. Ton de Leeuw. *Car nos vignes sont en fleur*, bars 1–3

In constructing melodic horizontals from these formulas, de Leeuw employs a set of rhythmic models, used both independently and in combination. This approach

¹³ It should be noted that Ton de Leeuw consistently employed the resources of spatial music. Striking examples include such vocal-instrumental and chamber-instrumental works as *Haiku II* (1968) and *Spatial Music I–IV* (1966–1968). In the former (*Haiku II*), the soprano moves between six points within the performance space—a solution strongly reminiscent of the celebrated anti-opera *Passaggio* (1961–1962) by Luciano Berio.

S1 S2 S3 T1 A1 T2 A2 T3 A3 B1 B2 B3

Example 5. Ton de Leeuw. *Car nos vignes sont en fleur*:
spatial arrangement of the singers

is also applied in the superimposition of several variants of a single horizontal line, producing a more structurally defined heterophony in comparison with the opening measures of the work (*Example 6*).

The image shows a musical score for four vocal parts: S1-3, T1, T2,3, and B1-3. The lyrics are: 'l'é - - - ter - nel. des tor feu, le feu dé - vo - - - rant de l'é - - - - - ter - nel, des tor feu, le feu dé - vo - rant de l'é - - - - - ter - nel, des tor feu, le feu dé - vo - rant de l'é - - - - - ter - nel, des tor'. The score includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one flat, and a 3/4 time signature. There are triplets and slurs in the notation.

Example 6. Ton de Leeuw. *Car nos vignes sont en fleur*, bars 68–71

The principal vocal techniques employed by Ton de Leeuw integrate organically into the atmosphere of “neo-archaism” characteristic of his works. Alongside conventional choral singing (normal singing), he makes use of Sprechgesang, as well as non-notated recitation on abstract syllables; an important role is also played by occasional microtonal intonation (the singing of quarter-tones).

Like Giacinto Scelsi—who, after experimenting with avant-garde techniques, reoriented himself toward the study of ancient music and combined

modality-based musical language with archaic literary texts—de Leeuw, beginning in 1970, turned to biblical texts in his choral works (the aforementioned *Car nos vignes sont en fleur* for twelve-part mixed choir a cappella, as well as *Élégie pour les villes détruites—Elegy for the Destroyed Cities*, 1994), Native American myths (*The Birth of Music* for mixed choir a cappella, 1975), the hymns of Kabir¹⁴ (*Five Hymns* for mixed choir, two pianos, and percussion, 1987–1988), fragments of Indian music-theoretical treatises (*The Magic of Music I* for two-part choir, 1970), and the treatise of Shitao¹⁵ (*Cloudy Forms* for male choir a cappella, 1970).

A similar shift of emphasis in choral content toward religious-philosophical and, more broadly, existential lyricism also characterizes the work of Hans Kox (1930–2019). Among the principal influences evident in his early compositions were the works of Badings, Berg, and Mahler. From the latter, Kox inherited an interest in large-scale vocal-symphonic compositions devoted to fundamental questions of human existence—the purpose of life and the problem of moral choice in times of trial. Among his best-known works are *Requiem for Europe* for four (!) choirs, two organs, and orchestra on texts by Paul Celan, the Bible, and the composer himself (1971); the cantata *Anne Frank* for soloists, choir, and orchestra (1984), based on the famous diary of Anne Frank; the vocal-symphonic composition *Das Credo quia absurdum* for soloists, choir, and orchestra on texts from the Bible, the Qur'an, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Rainer Maria Rilke (1995); and *Symphony No. 6* for mixed choir and orchestra on texts by Nietzsche and Celan (2012).

Although Kox began his career as a church organist, in his religious-philosophical compositions he did not confine himself exclusively to Christian sources. While critical of contemporary international politics, he nevertheless followed global events with deep concern, expressing profound sympathy for the victims of interreligious

¹⁴ Kabir (1440–1518) was a medieval Indian poet and preacher. His hymns are included in the sacred scripture of Sikhism—the monotheistic religion that emerged at the intersection of Hindu and Islamic ideas—the *Adi Granth*, the compilation of which was completed in 1604.

¹⁵ Shitao (1642–1707) was a Chinese painter and theorist of painting, the author of the treatise *Round of Discussions on Painting* (*Huayu Lu*).

and interethnic conflicts. Humanism constitutes the fundamental theme uniting Kox's works across genres. Addressing a broad audience, Hans Kox did not abandon the tonal foundation of his musical language, favoring traditional harmonic as well as timbral-textural resources. A distinguishing feature of Kox's music is its clear melodic foundation, evoking associations, on the one hand, with the works of Gustav Mahler and, on the other, with those of Hendrik Andriessen. One may also speak of the indirect influence of the post-war avant-garde, manifested in particular in his engagement with ideas of spatial music.¹⁶ For example, in *Requiem for Europe* Kox adopts Karlheinz Stockhausen's concept (from *Carré*, 1960) of the isolated placement of four choirs around the audience in combination with instrumental groups.

Interaction with tradition at a new stage is likewise demonstrated in the work of the most internationally renowned Dutch composer of the last quarter of the twentieth century, Louis Andriessen (1939–2021). He began studying composition with his father, Hendrik Andriessen, and from 1957 at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague with Kees van Baaren; between 1961 and 1965 he studied with Luciano Berio, through whom he became acquainted with a wide range of pre-war and post-war avant-garde works. Through his active public engagement, Andriessen demonstrated a rejection of bourgeois morality, embracing ideas associated with anarchism and Maoism. Largely under the influence of his socio-political views, he moved away from avant-garde techniques, gravitating in his restrained, anti-expressive manner toward the musical ideas of Igor Stravinsky—the composer whom Andriessen ranked above all others among the masters of the first half of the twentieth century. In 1983, in his book on Stravinsky *The Apollonian Clockwork* (written in collaboration with Elmer Schönberger), Andriessen wrote:

The true influence of Stravinsky has only just begun. [...] It is the type of influence inspired by misunderstanding, the deliberate distortion, the good wrong conclusion [12, p. 6].

¹⁶ In an article devoted to trends in the development of post-war avant-garde choral music, we have already noted that stereophony in the second half of the twentieth century became one of the most characteristic features of choral and vocal-ensemble compositions. In a number of works by Karlheinz Stockhausen (from *Carré* to *Engel-Prozessionen*), Luigi Nono (*Ha venido: canciones para Silvia, Sarà dolce tacere, Das atmende Klarsein*), and György Ligeti (*Requiem, Lux aeterna*), we observe a deliberate use of textural and timbral resources to achieve spatial effects. For more detail, see [11].

The composer repeatedly emphasized: “Stravinsky was my real example of how to deal with musical material in the 20th century” (as cited in [3, p. 112]). Through his immersion in Stravinsky’s oeuvre, Andriessen discovered a universal method that enabled him to work with stylistically heterogeneous material while achieving a convincing artistic result:

The musical material which I use changes over the years, because I have other musical interests. But my approach will not change, it will always be the same.

The best example is the approach of someone like Igor Stravinsky, who doesn’t really care about something like style or personality, but who cares about music. I think that’s more or less the ideal approach towards the profession: that you care more about what you think you have to tell about music than how to express yourself (as cited in [4, p. 17]).

One of the first works with which Andriessen made a striking public statement was *De staat* (*The State*, 1972–1976) for four female voices and instruments. The ensemble—comprising classical instruments (two harps, four violas, two pianos, sixteen wind instruments) and popular instruments (four electric guitars and bass guitar)—as well as the modal basis of the work and the predominantly monophonic writing for the four female voices, testify to its “anti-avant-garde” and accordingly “anti-bourgeois” orientation. Moreover, the recourse to vocal monody (marked *legatissimo*, *senza vibrato*) with only rare harmonic interpolations may also reflect an association with ancient Greek monody, since the literary source of the composition is Plato’s dialogue of the same name, a fragment of which Andriessen includes in the original language.

It is also significant that during these years Louis Andriessen emerged as a politically engaged composer, creating in response to contemporary world events the songs of protest against the Vietnam War (*Thanh Hoa*, 1972; *Dat gebeurt in Vietnam*, 1973) and the political song *Laat toch vrij de straat* (*Let the Streets Be Free*, 1978). It is possible that the monolithic unison singing, combined with fragments of chordal texture in these Dutch “mass songs,” helped determine the two most characteristic modes of presentation in Andriessen’s choral and vocal-ensemble works—chordal texture and monophony. These features appear in *De stijl* (*Style*, 1984–1985),

Odysseus' Women (1995), and the scenic oratorio *De materie* (Matter, 1989),¹⁷ as well as in a number of other, less widely known compositions.

Standing somewhat apart in this respect is the score *De tijd* (*Time*, 1980–1981), in which the women's choir is treated as an essential timbral component of the overall vocal-instrumental sonority. Based on a text by Augustine of Hippo devoted to the comparison of the categories of “time” and “eternity,” the composition illustrates the opposition of these concepts through two polar types of temporal organization:

- a) a pulsating type—sharply rhythmized through the opposition of binary and ternary meters;
- b) a continual type—associated with the gradual transition of harmonies that seem to sound “outside time” (strongly recalling such works by György Ligeti as *Lontano* and *Lux aeterna*).

The verbal foundations of Andriessen's works reveal his interest in elite literature. Among his sources are philosophical writings by Plato, Laozi, and Augustine, as well as outstanding monuments of world literature (Homer's *Odyssey*, Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*). On the other hand, we also encounter examples of political literature among his sources—works by Mikhail Bakunin, Armand Arnoux, and Jaap van der Merwe. This striking combination invites comparison with the vocal oeuvre of Luigi Nono. At the same time, the democratic character—and at times even eccentricity—of Andriessen's musical language ensured the wide popularity and international performance demand of his compositions.

Conclusions

The emergence of such figures as Henk Badings, Ton de Leeuw, Louis Andriessen, and others makes it possible to regard the development of Dutch choral music as a unified and progressive process, within which several defining features may be identified:

¹⁷ Turning to the genre of staged oratorio is one of the indications of Louis Andriessen's desire to reform traditional music theatre. In the article by Elena V. Kiseeva and Emma S. Korotkiewa devoted to the specific features of the operatic genre in the works of Kaija Saariaho, the authors mention Louis Andriessen among those composers whose work was aimed at a fundamental renewal of opera. For more detail, see [13, p. 130].

1. A “late entry” into the process of choral compositional development in comparison with neighboring European countries—France, Germany, and United Kingdom;
2. The orientation of leading Dutch composers toward outstanding models from earlier musical epochs, above all the Renaissance;
3. The presence of two largely autonomous lines of development:
 - a) a traditional line—represented by composers inclined to follow the musical traditions of their own country;
 - b) an innovative line—associated with composers who sought to incorporate contemporary compositional techniques into their works.

The overall trajectory of Dutch choral composition—from the first stirrings of the “Dutch Renaissance” in the works of Bernard Zweers, Johan Wagenaar, and Alphons Diepenbrock to the appearance of works by Badings, de Leeuw, and Andriessen on international stages—enabled the Netherlands, several centuries after the close of the great era of the Franco-Flemish masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, once again to assert its significant place on the contemporary map of European choral composition.

References

1. Samama, L. (2023). *Alphons Diepenbrock: The life, times and music of a Dutch romantic composer* (B. Annable, Trans.). Toccata Press / Boydell & Brewer. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv31vqq4m>
2. Deviatko, E. (2021). *Al'fons Dipenbrok: kompozitor i esseist* [Alfons Diepenbrock: the composer and essayist]. Verso. (In Russ.).
3. Nash, P. (2001). A discussion of *Overture to Orpheus* with Louis Andriessen. *Contemporary Music Review*, 20(1), 107–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494460100640101>
4. Potter, B. K. (1981). The Music of Louis Andriessen: Dialectical Double-Dutch. *Contact: A Journal for Contemporary Music*, 23, 16 –22.
5. Overbeeke, E. (2022). Nederland en de Tweede Weense School. *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging Voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis*, 72(1), 129–177. <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVNM2022.1.005.OVER>
6. Antcliffe, H. (1924). The Renascence of Dutch music. *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 51, 1–14.

7. van Gessel, J. (2024). Savouring the essence of Christianity: the first Dutch performances of Bach's sacred music (1870–1899). *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis*, 74(1), 135–165. <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVNM2024.1.003.GESS>
8. Jensen, L. (2024). *Water: A Dutch cultural history*. Radboud University Press. <https://doi.org/10.54195/ASQH4249>
9. Aliyeva, H. (2024). The history of choral music: From medieval to contemporary choirs. *Deutsche Internationale Zeitschrift für zeitgenössische Wissenschaft*, 84, 5–6. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12752418>
10. Leeuw, T. de (1995). Back to the source. In J. Sligter (Ed.), *Ton de Leeuw*. Harwood Academic Publishers.
11. Ryzhinsky, A. S. (2022). Major trends in the development of choral music by the Western European Avant-Garde from the 1960s. *Problemy muzykal'noj nauki / Music Scholarship*, (4), 38–52 (In Russ.). <https://doi.org/10.56620/2782-3598.2022.4.038-052>
12. Andriessen, L., & Schönberger, E. (1989). *The Apollonian Clockwork: On Stravinsky* (J. Hamburg, Trans.). Oxford University Press.
13. Kiseeva, E., & Korotkiewa, E. (2023). Interpretation of the genre in opera *Innocence* by Kaija Saariaho. *Problemy muzykal'noj nauki / Music Scholarship*, (4), 128–141. (In Russ.). <https://doi.org/10.56620/2782-3598.2023.4.128-141>

Список литературы

1. *Samata L.* Alphons Diepenbrock: The Life, Times and Music of a Dutch Romantic Composer. London: Toccata Press / Boydell & Brewer, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv31vqq4m>
2. *Девятко Е. Д.* Альфонс Дипенброк: композитор и эссеист. Петрозаводск: Версо, 2021.
3. *Nash P.* A Discussion of *Overture to Orpheus* with Louis Andriessen // *Contemporary Music Review*. 2001. Vol. 20. P. 107–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494460100640101>
4. *Potter B. K.* The Music of Louis Andriessen: Dialectical Double-Dutch // *Contact: A Journal for Contemporary Music*. 1981. Vol. 23. P. 16–22.
5. *Overbeeke E.* Nederland en de Tweede Weense School // *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis*. 2022. Vol. 72, No. 1. P. 129–178. <https://doi.org/10.5117/tvnm2022.1.005.over>
6. *Antcliffe H.* The Renaissance of Dutch Music // *Proceedings of the Musical Association*. 1924. Vol. 51. P. 1–14.

7. *Gessel J. van*. Savouring the essence of Christianity: the first Dutch performances of Bach's sacred music (1870–1899) // Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis. 2024. Vol. 74. Issue 1. P. 135–165. <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVNM2024.1.003.GESS>

8. *Jensen L.* Water: A Dutch Cultural History. Nijmegen: Radboud University Press, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.54195/ASQH4249>

9. *Aliyeva H.* The history of choral music: from medieval to contemporary choirs // Deutsche Internationale Zeitschrift für zeitgenössische Wissenschaft. 2024. № 84. P. 5–6. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12752418>

10. *Leeuw T. de*. Back to the Source // Ton de Leeuw / ed. J. Sligter. London & New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995.

11. *Рыжинский А. С.* Основные тенденции развития хоровой музыки западноевропейского авангарда в 1960-е годы // Проблемы музыкальной науки / Music Scholarship. 2022. № 4. С. 38–52. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2782-3598.2022.4.038-052>

12. *Андриссен Л., Шёнбергер Э.* Часы Аполлона. О Стравинском / пер. с нидерландского И. Лесковской под ред. Б. Филановского. СПб.: Институт ПРО АРТЕ, 2003.

13. *Кисеева Е. В., Короткиева Э. С.* Трактовка жанра в опере «Невиновность» Кайи Саариахо // Проблемы музыкальной науки / Music Scholarship. 2023. № 4. С. 128–141. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2782-3598.2023.4.128-141>

Information about the author:

Alexander S. Ryzhinsky — Dr.Sci. (Arts), Rector, Professor at the Choral Conducting Department, Gnesin Russian Academy of Music.

Сведения об авторе:

Рыжинский А. С. — доктор искусствоведения, ректор, профессор кафедры хорового дирижирования, Российская академия музыки имени Гнесиных.

The article was submitted 14.01.2026;
approved after reviewing 04.03.2026;
accepted for publication 11.03.2026.

Статья поступила в редакцию 14.01.2026;
одобрена после рецензирования 04.03.2026;
принята к публикации 11.03.2026.